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*NSC Review

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STAFF REPORT
of the
NATIONAL SECURITY RESOURCES BOARD
on
SECURITY FOR THE NATION'S CAPITAL

EXPLANATION OF THE PROBLEM

1. It is the function of the National Security Resources Board, according to Sec. 103(c)(6) of The National Security Act of 1947, to advise the President concerning "the strategic relocation of industries, services, government, and economic activities, the continuous operation of which is essential to the Nation's security." Accordingly, the Board is faced with the problem of making adequate provision for the continuous operation of Federal Government activities during an emergency, with the least possible disruption of those activities, by formulating plans and taking steps in time of peace to provide the maximum security for the Nation's capital in time of war.

BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

Assumptions

2. The Board has based its study of the problem of security for the Nation's capital on the assumption that peace will continue for at least the next five or ten years. In other words, this is a long-term plan. Nevertheless the Board considers that a start should be made on the implementation of the plan immediately. Should war unfortunately come sooner than five years, emergency measures would have to be taken apart from the long-range plan.

3. In formulating long-range plans for the security of the Capital, the Board has based its thinking on two further assumptions:

- (1) That Washington will continue to be the Nation's capital unless rendered completely uninhabitable, and
- (2) That Washington may well be a high priority target in the event of war and may be attacked on a scale of unprecedented magnitude.

4. In arriving at the assumption that Washington will continue to be the Nation's capital, the National Security Resources Board has given consideration to several factors:

- (1) The Board considers that it would be impractical, from the point of view of the cost, to plan at this point for the transfer of the seat of the government to some other city.

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(2) It is considered that from a psychological point of view, it would be extremely damaging to the morale of the people to plan to move the Nation's capital from Washington.

(3) Studies of the subject indicate that geographical location alone is no guarantee of security since in the event of another war it is likely that any city in the United States will be subject to attack. Military authorities advise that the most important measure that can be taken for protection against attack in a future war is dispersal, and it is the Board's understanding that protection of Government activities through dispersal can be as effective at a range of ten to fifteen miles from downtown Washington as at a much greater range. In other words, the dispersal of Government activities in any given location is more important as a protective measure than the location itself.

(4) History lends support to the conclusion that Washington should remain the Nation's capital. In previous wars, when the United States Government was faced with the problem of whether or not to withdraw to another city because Washington was under attack, the decision has always been made that Washington should remain the seat of the government. During World War II when the British capital was under heavy German attack, the British Government nevertheless decided to remain in London.

Peace-Time Municipal Planning Factors

5. Apart from security reasons, there are sound reasons of a peacetime municipal planning character which lend support to the need for making prompt decisions with respect to the security of the Nation's capital.

6. The Public Buildings Administration reports that 135,000 Federal office employees, excluding the Legislative and Judicial branches, now work in the downtown Washington area. It has been agreed by the Federal Works Agency, the National Capital Park and Planning Commission, and the Bureau of the Budget that this figure should be considered a ceiling beyond which it would not be possible to go without causing undue congestion, traffic problems, and other forms of expense and inconvenience.

7. There exist six million square feet of space in temporary buildings (including the Navy and Munitions Buildings on Constitution Avenue

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and other World War I "temporary" buildings). Peacetime municipal planning requires that these be demolished at the earliest practicable date.

Security Factors

8. If temporary office buildings are demolished or if the number of Federal employees in Washington increases, it will be necessary to build additional permanent office space to house the displaced or new employees or both. Security factors should be taken into account in planning the construction of such additional office buildings as may be necessary. This procedure will be in line with the procedure which the Government has recommended that industry should follow in planning the construction of new plants, and by setting the example, will strengthen the industry policy, which must be accepted voluntarily by industry in order to be effective.

9. The National Security Resources Board has been informed by military and intelligence agencies of the Government that in the event the United States should become involved in a major war within the next few years, it can be expected that both conventional and unconventional types of attack will be made upon the continental United States without a formal declaration of war. In the unconventional category, the use of atomic weapons, guided missiles and chemical and biological agents is to be expected. These attacks will probably be simultaneous and of unprecedented magnitude directed against industrial and urban centers with the object of producing swift and widespread destruction.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Paragraph No. 1

10. It is recommended that the Federal Works Agency, working with the National Capital Park and Planning Commission, prepare a Master Plan for the location of all future Government buildings in the Washington area together with requisite highways and other public services. The Master Plan will be reviewed by the National Security Resources Board for its consistency with security factors.

11. The fundamental principle of this plan will be to construct all future Government buildings, except those exempted by the President or Congress, in locations so dispersed as to provide for reasonable security against possible enemy attack on the Nation's capital. This is interpreted to mean that the dispersed units will be separated from each other and from the downtown Washington area by a distance of five to ten

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miles, depending upon topography, transportation and utility development. The plan will provide for limiting the number of Government office employees in downtown Washington to the agreed-upon ceiling of 135,000, and will include provision for adequate highways to permit orderly evacuation of Washington.

Paragraph No. 2

12. It is recommended that the Bureau of the Budget conduct a study to provide the basis for determining what Government departments or agencies, or parts thereof, including the military, can operate least disadvantageously in the new buildings in the outlying Washington area. The findings of the Bureau of the Budget will be reviewed by the NSRB to assure that they are consistent with efficient operation of the Federal Government in time of war. It is contemplated that the relocation of Government agencies will proceed as rapidly as possible following the approval of the President of the plan of the Bureau of the Budget and upon availability of funds.

Paragraph No. 3

13. It is recommended that the Bureau of the Budget also conduct a study to determine what military and other Government agencies could operate efficiently in locations completely removed from the Washington area, if the necessity arises.

14. Despite the fact that one of the basic assumptions is that adequate protection against attack can be obtained through dispersal of Government activities within a given area, such as the Washington area, it is believed that complete removal of some Government agencies, or parts thereof, would facilitate dispersion of remaining agencies within the Washington area.

15. Care should be taken to see that the other parts of the study called for in the Recommendation are not delayed because of the potentially controversial nature of Paragraph No. 3.

Paragraph No. 4

16. It is recommended that the Federal Works Agency draw up plans for providing underground office space in Washington to house key Government activities necessary for the efficient conduct of war. According to preliminary estimates, the plan should provide space

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for 5,000 persons and should be integrated with the overall Master Plan for the Washington area.

Paragraph No. 5

17. It is recommended that all future planning, both civilian and military, which will affect the area surrounding the Nation's capital, be in conformance with the Master Plan. The President will approve only those requests for new Government buildings to be constructed in the Washington area that are in accordance with the approved Master Plan.

Paragraph No. 6

18. It is recommended that the President inform Congress of the Master Plan and request Congress to provide the funds at the appropriate time necessary to implement the plan, including both underground and surface construction.

Paragraph No. 7

19. Against the contingency that an attack on Washington be of such magnitude as to make it necessary to evacuate the city, it is recommended that:

- (1) the staff of the National Security Resources Board prepare a plan for several alternative locations for the seat of Government based on a study by the Federal Works Agency of state university and other facilities in various cities which might be suitable for an emergency National capital;
- (2) each department and agency prepare a plan for its orderly evacuation from Washington and the Federal Works Agency will coordinate the various plans.

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